

Tips for Becoming a Better Encourager

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul was a model encourager who intentionally worked to strengthen followers of Christ. Following Paul's lead, let's consider some tips for becoming better encouragers.

Recognize Discouragement: Don't ignore or overlook discouragement in others—even when it makes you feel uncomfortable. Choose to notice and step into their pain and suffering. To become better encouragers, we must do more than take note of what's going on in the lives of others. We seek to understand their trials and sorrows so that we can petition the Father on behalf of our discouraged friends that He might meet them in their struggle. When we share in the joys and the sorrows, we learn how to give thanks and pray.

Encourage to Build Up and Strengthen: What's the point of providing encouragement? Paul commends the church in 1 Thess. 5:8–11 for their ongoing track record of encouragement. And he urges the people to keep up the good work for a very specific purpose. He instructs, "Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up." We must understand that encouragement isn't simply about making others feel better. Encouragement is meant to strengthen the heart so that we will stand firm, take heart, and be built together in faith.

Be Patient as You Encourage: As fellow recipients of God's grace through Christ, we must be patient with the weary just as God has been patient with us. Paul writes that we are to "admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak." Specifically, he exhorts us to "be patient with them all." Why? Because it's easier to respond with annoyance or frustration to those who struggle in ways we don't. It's far more challenging to encourage with the patience and grace of the Father. Christ calls us to sacrifice our own timing, agenda, and personal comfort to patiently admonish and encourage with his timely care. While encouragement may not come naturally or easily, it can be learned and practiced by the grace of God.

We are not naturally better encouragers because we are older, further along in our faith, married, or have kids. As we labor diligently by grace, may the Spirit enable us to more skillfully encourage and exhort one another.

By: Don Jacobs